Inquiry

From: Joshua Powell <Josh@thepowellhousepress.com>
To: supervisor@chathamnewyork.gov
Date: February 18, 2026 at 1:13 PM
Priority: High Importance

Dear Mr. Collins:

I received an email from a reader who shared a document — public, of course — of a map of 509 Bashford Road in the Town of Chatham. It comes from the Columbia County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board. You are on this board.

One of these maps shows clearly a DEC-identified wetland on property (509 Bashford Road) the county (where you are a member of the Board of Supervisors) recently rezoned as Agriculture. As you are aware, any rezoning like this automatically triggers SEQR, which requires all local, regional, and state government agencies to equally examine the environmental impacts along with the social and economic considerations for a certain project, or action, during their discretionary review. I would like to understand the reasoning for the county to waive an environmental review.

According to the map not only is the property on a designated DEC wetland that is adjacent to more designated DEC wetlands, it also shows a land slope of or exceeding 15%, which is the threshold for concern around runoff — specifically pollution and erosion. The other issue here is "social and economic considerations" — exactly what feedback did the county get from the residents? As of now, there is a petition with over 100 signatures at the county, as well as many letters that have been submitted to the town against this project, that predates the county meeting allowing this change earlier this month. There is not a single document supporting this project.

As the Town of Chatham's supervisor, you have been aware of this issue and its controversy, yet you were absent from the meeting where the county Board of Supervisors voted on this very issue. Can I ask why you were not present for a vote of such direct consequence to the residents you represent?

Additionally, I am requesting again that you clarify/explain your relationship with Dr. Ed Williams as it pertains to this matter. Josh Powell 518-567-8300

https://sites.google.com/a/columbiacountyny.com/columbia-county-agriculture-and-farmland-board/